

**Honorable City Planning Commission
Cincinnati, Ohio**

February 3, 2006

SUBJECT: A report and recommendation on text revisions to Chapter 1427 (Sign Regulations) of the City of Cincinnati Zoning Code.

BACKGROUND / DISCUSSION:

Under the direction of City Council, a Sign Task Force was formed in 2004 to discuss changes to Chapter 1427 of the Zoning Code, which includes Sign Regulations for all Zoning Districts. The Sign Task Force met for more than a year to identify sections in Chapter 1427 that: 1) required technical corrections such as definitions and related sections, 2) presented difficulties in interpretation, administration or enforcement or required unwarranted variances through the hearing process, or 3) warranted changes to conform to current practices in the industry.

Staff presented the proposed revisions to the City Planning Commission (Commission) on November 4, 2005. At that time the Commission formed a three-member Subcommittee that subsequently reviewed the proposed revisions on November 22, 2005. Based on comments from the Subcommittee and with the concurrence of the Sign Task Force staff removed language drafted to permit the inclusion of roof signs in MG and ME Districts from the proposed text amendments to Chapter 1427.

Attached to this cover report are the proposed text amendments to Chapter 1427 and the justification for these changes. These materials along with the Commission's recommendations will be presented to City Council.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the City Planning Commission favorably recommend to City Council the approval of the proposed text amendments to Chapter 1427 (Sign Regulations) of the City of Cincinnati Zoning Code as included in the Sign Task Force report and as modified by input from the City Planning Commission Subcommittee.

APPROVED:

Respectfully Submitted,

Margaret A. Wuerstle
Chief Planner

Adrienne Cowden
Senior City Planner

Note: The following definitions for “Awning,” “Canopy,” and “Marquee” are to be included in Chapter 1401 (Definitions) of the Zoning Code.

§ 1401-01-A14. Awning.

An “Awning” is an architectural projection that provides weather protection, identity or decoration and is wholly supported by the building to which it is attached. An awning is comprised of a lightweight, rigid skeleton structure over which a covering is attached. An awning may be fixed or of a type that can be retracted, folded or collapsed.

§ 1401-01-C. Canopy.

A “Canopy” is an architectural projection that provides weather protection, identity or decoration. It is supported by the building to which it is attached or by not less than one stanchion support at the outer end. A canopy is comprised of a rigid structure over which a covering is attached.

§ 1401-01-M3. Marquee.

A “Marquee” is a permanent roofed structure attached to and supported by the building and projects over public property / right-of-way. A marquee is constructed of a durable material such as glass or metal and is designed to accept signage and to provide protection from the elements. Marquees are not awnings or canopies.

Note: All of the following proposed changes are to be included in Chapter 1427 (Sign Regulations) of the Zoning Code.

§ 1427-03-A. Awning Sign.

“Awning Sign” means a sign painted on or attached to, or supported by an awning in any manner.

§ 1427-03-C. Canopy Sign.

“Canopy Sign” means a sign painted on, attached to, or made part of a canopy in any manner.

§ 1427-03-M. Marquee Sign.

"Marquee Sign" means a sign painted on, attached to, or made part of a marquee in any manner.

§ 1427-03-P2. Projecting Sign.

"Projecting Sign" means a sign that is wholly or partly dependant on a building for support or suspended from a pole attached to a structure and that projects from the building at a perpendicular angle or approximately perpendicular angle. A Projecting Sign may not extend more than six feet from the wall to which it is attached.



FIGURE 1427-03-P1 Example of Projecting Sign

§ 1427-03-S2. Sign Face Area.

"Sign Face Area" means the area of the smallest enclosing circle, half-circle, parallelogram, or triangle that encloses all of the letters, figures or symbols that comprise the sign message, including any background forming an integral part of the display, but not including any structure supporting the sign, unless the support structure forms a part of the message being displayed. Irregular shapes shall be calculated by up to a maximum of three connected shapes. Refer to Figure 1427-03-S2

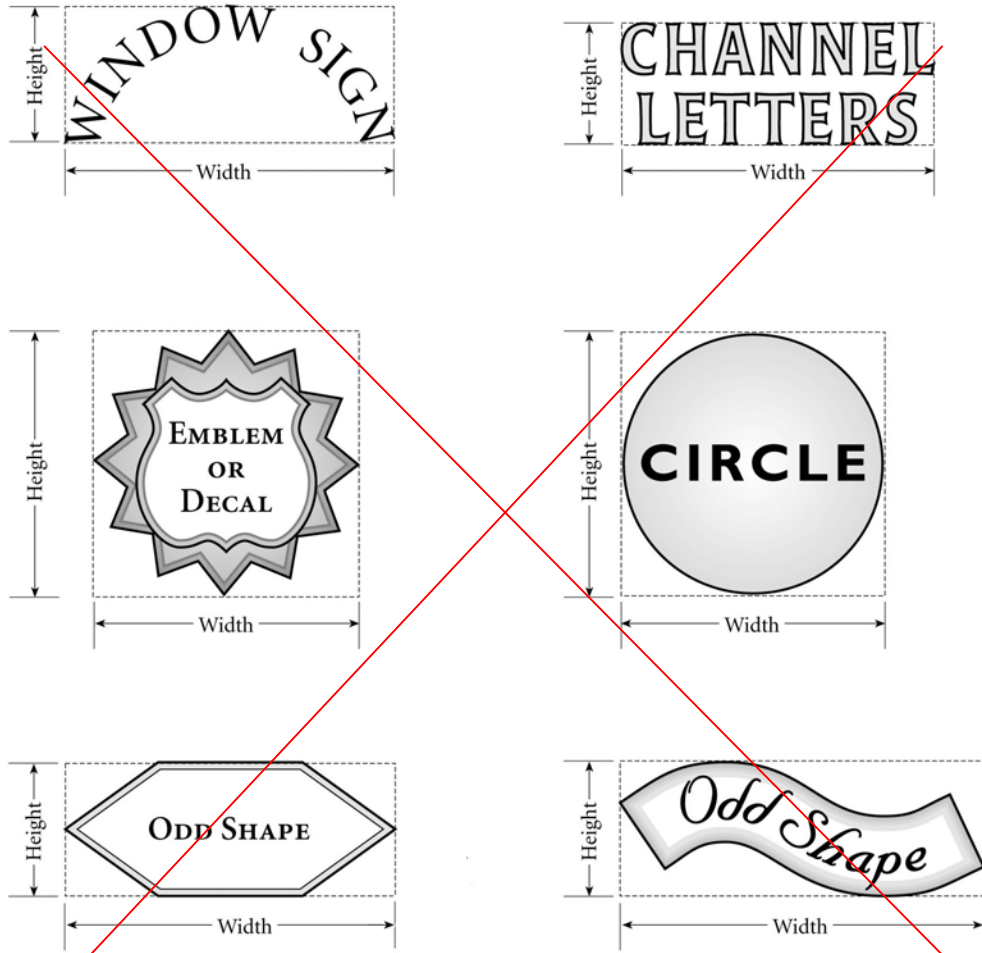


FIGURE 1427-03-S2 Sign Face Area

§ 1427-03-W. Wall Sign.

“Wall Sign” means a sign painted on or fastened to the wall of a building or structure in a plane parallel or approximately parallel to the plane of said wall and affixed in such a manner that the wall becomes the supporting structure for or forms the background surface of the sign.

§ 1427-05. Applicability.

The regulations set forth in this Chapter apply to all on-site signs in all districts, except in the DD District and in the IR District, where the sign regulations set forth in Chapter 1411, Downtown Development District, and Chapter 1417, Institutional-Residential District, apply where inconsistent with the regulations set forth in this Chapter.

A sign regulated by this Chapter may not be erected or displayed unless a building permit is obtained or the sign is listed as an exempt sign in §1427-11.

Every sign erected, constructed, painted or maintained for which a permit is issued under these regulations, must be plainly marked with the permit number issued for said sign. The Department of Buildings and Inspections will issue an identifier with the building permit.

§ 1427-09. Prohibited Sign Types, Locations, and Message.

The following signs, sign types, sign locations, and sign messages are prohibited:

- (a) In any public park or on any public property without the permission of the City of Cincinnati.
- (b) On any traffic control sign, utility pole, street sign, or tree.
- (c) In any location where the view of approaching or intersecting traffic would be obstructed. A sign may not be located so as to interfere with the safe movement of vehicles or pedestrians entering, leaving, or crossing a public right-of-way.
- (d) A sign affixed to a vehicle or trailer, unless the vehicle or trailer is used in ordinary course of business for the transportation of persons or materials and not for the primary purpose of advertising.
- (e) On any property without prior authorization granted by the property owner on which any sign is displayed.
- (f) Moving, flashing or animated signs, balloons, gas inflated signs or similar inflated signs, portable signs, searchlights, streamers, spinners, flags (other than those specifically permitted herein), outdoor image projections (signs projected from an external light source onto a building or structure) or any other similar devices.
- (g) Roof Signs.
- (h)

§ 1427-11. Exempt Signs.

The following signs are exempt from the permit requirements of this Chapter and are permitted in any zoning district:

- (a) Street address numbers displayed in accordance with § 723-65, Displaying House Numbers, of the Cincinnati Municipal Code.
- (b) Public information, identification, special event, directional, and other signs erected by a government agency.
- (c) Notices posted by a public utility or other quasi-public agent in the performance of a public duty.

- (d) City entry, community or district identification signs not exceeding 20 square feet in area and eight feet in height.
- (e) Names of buildings, dates of erection, commemorative tablets and the like, when carved into stone, concrete or similar material or made of bronze, aluminum or other permanent type material.
- (f) Credit card, trading stamp, or trade association signs not exceeding one-half square foot each and not exceeding ten per establishment.
- (g) Flags not exceeding 72 square feet each. A flag may be displayed on a pole not exceeding 35 feet in height or the height of the principal structure on the site, whichever is less. No more than 4 flags or flagpoles are permitted per site.
- (h) One Identification Sign per dwelling unit or per business, not exceeding one square foot each.
- (i) Instructional On-Site Signs provided that such signs are limited to a maximum of six square feet in area. If constructed as a ground mounted sign the maximum height is four feet.
- (j) Temporary Open House Signs provided that they are limited in number to a maximum of four per event, limited in size to a maximum of 12 square feet in area and located at least 12 feet from the edge of the street pavement. An open house sign may only be installed the day before the open house and must be removed the same day of the open house after its conclusion. In no case shall an open house sign be installed for more than 48 continuous hours.
- (k) Real Estate Sign.
 - (1) For all zoning districts, only one such sign is allowed per site per street frontage, and is limited in size to a maximum total sign face area of 24 square feet and 12 square feet for any single sign face.
 - (2) The sign may be a ground sign, a window sign, or a wall sign.
 - (3) All signs must be removed within 14 days after the sale, lease, or rental has occurred. These signs may only be installed on the property to which they refer.
- (l) Noncommercial Signs as regulated by § 1427-15.

§ 1427-13. Temporary Signs.

A temporary sign is permitted in any zoning district, requires obtaining a building permit or a Certificate of Compliance, may only be externally illuminated, and may include:

- (a) A Temporary Construction Sign provided that such a sign is limited in size to a maximum total sign face area of 64 square feet and 32 square feet for any single sign face. Each site may only have one sign. Construction signs cannot be installed prior to the commencement of construction on the site and must be removed within 24 hours of completion of construction. Construction signs may be erected as wall or ground signs.
- (b) Decorations, banners, and signs for public demonstrations, special events, or for the temporary promotion of civic, welfare or charitable enterprises or events. A banner may not exceed 12 feet in any of its dimensions. These signs may be installed for a period not to exceed 30 days with a minimum of 30 days between installation periods for a maximum of four times for every calendar year.
- (c) Residential subdivisions with multiple lots for sale, lease, or rent may have one temporary ground mounted sign per perimeter street frontage around the subdivision in addition to signs allowed under §1427-11-(m) Real Estate Sign. The additional residential subdivision sign may not exceed 250 square feet in area or ten square feet for every lot offered, whichever is less. This sign must be at least 50 feet from a perimeter street or right-of-way surrounding the subdivision. No two signs, if allowed, may be closer than 200 feet to each other. The sign must be removed when 75% of the lots in the subdivision have received a certificate of occupancy.
- (d) One on-site commercial sign per site, installed only as a temporary ground sign, not exceeding 36 square feet per sign face, with a maximum of two sign faces and a maximum sign height of 5 feet. Such sign may be installed for a period not to exceed 30 days for a maximum of four times for every calendar year with a minimum of 30 days between installations.

§ 1427-19. Murals.

One mural on only one wall of a building or structure is permitted. Murals require either a building permit or a Certificate of Compliance.

§ 1427-21. Maximum Total Sign Area.

In determining compliance with the maximum total sign area (See §1427-35-(a), §1427-37-(a), and §1427-39-(a)), the following rules apply:

- (a) The maximum total sign area for all buildings shall be the sum of the allowable building sign area permitted and the allowable ground sign area permitted in each of the individual zoning districts.
- (b) The maximum sign area for all building (wall, projecting, marquee, awning/canopy) signs shall be a multiple of the linear feet of building frontage occupied by an individual establishment, subject to the maximums delineated for each zoning district. No more than two building sign types may be used on a single building.
- (c) The maximum sign area for all ground signs shall be a multiple of the linear feet of lot frontage at the street, subject to the maximums delineated for each zoning district.
- (d) The maximum total sign area may be allocated among the permitted signs in each district, provided that each sign conforms to the applicable regulations of the district in which the sign is located and the applicable regulations for the type of sign.
- (e) In no case may the total area of all signs on a particular site exceed the maximum total sign area given for a site in a particular zoning district.
- (f) Signs which are exempt from permit requirements (§1427-11 Exempt Signs), listed as temporary signs (§1427-13 Temporary Signs) and non-commercial signs (§1427-15 Non-commercial Signs) do not count against the maximum total sign area for a site in a particular zoning district.

§ 1427-23. Wall Sign Regulations.

The following regulations apply to wall signs (See §1427-03-W), unless more specifically regulated elsewhere in this Chapter or by the District regulations applicable to the zoning district in which the sign is located:

- (a) A wall sign may not project above a roofline.
- (b) A wall sign may not be installed more than the permissible maximum height above grade as established per zoning district, as measured to the top of the sign.
- (c) Each individual wall sign face counts against the maximum total sign area (See §1427-21) permitted for all signs on a site and against the total area permitted for a wall sign as allowed in each district.

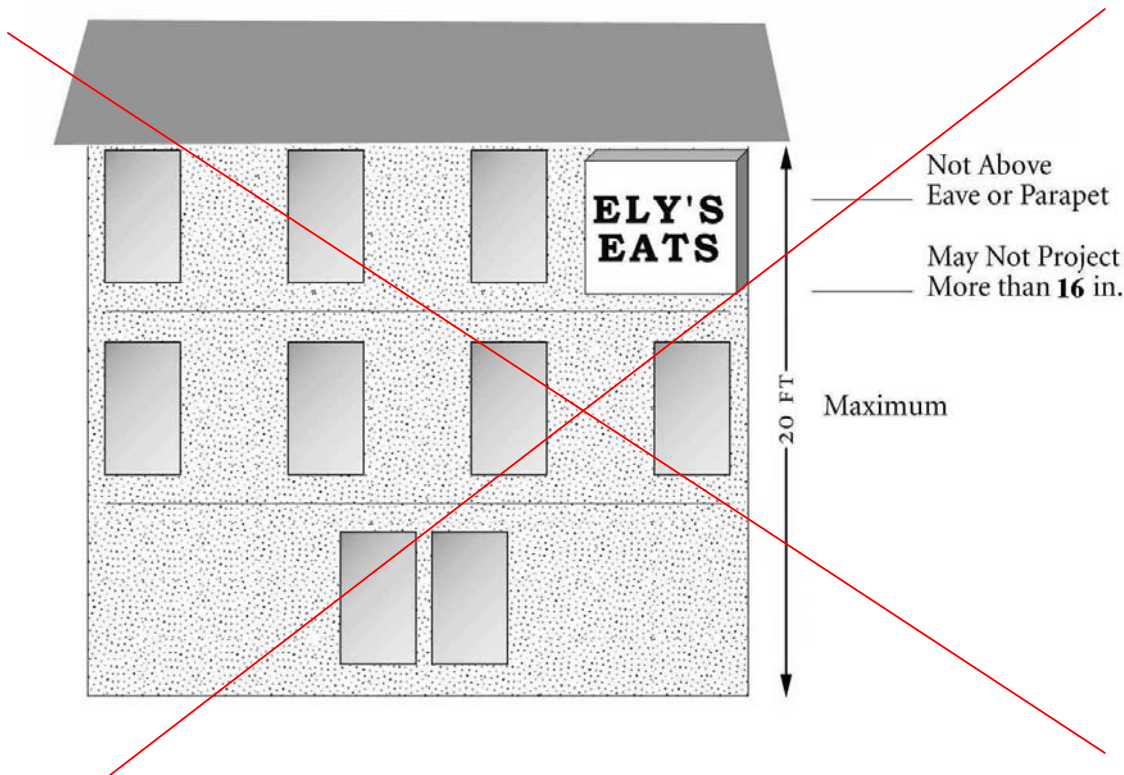




FIGURE 1427-23-A Examples of Wall Signs

§ 1427-25. Ground Sign Regulations.

The following regulations apply to ground signs (See §1427-03-G), unless more specifically regulated elsewhere in this Chapter or by the District regulations applicable to the zoning district in which the sign is located:

- (a) A ground sign may not be closer to a lot line or right-of-way than the greater of one-half the sign height or 15' when within a sight triangle. Refer to Figures 1427-25-A and 1427-25-C.
- (b) Only one ground sign per site is permitted for sites with less than 400 lineal feet of lot frontage. A secondary ground sign may be permitted on a lot with more than 400 feet of street frontage, but in no circumstance may two ground signs be erected within 200 feet of each other as measured along the street frontage.
- (c) For corner lots or sites with sufficient lot frontage of 400 lineal feet or greater to permit two ground signs, the primary ground sign shall not exceed the maximum total sign face area or square feet per sign face permitted in a district. The total sign face area of the second sign shall not exceed 50% of the maximum total sign face area or square feet per sign face permitted in a district.
- (d) For lots with double street frontage one ground sign may be installed per street frontage. A ground sign on an arterials or other major collector shall not exceed a maximum total sign face area or square feet per sign face permitted in a district. Ground signs erected on any other street frontage shall not exceed 50% of the maximum total sign face area or square feet per sign face permitted in a district. Double frontage lots are not subject to the restrictions of § 1427-25 (b).

- (e) Each individual ground sign face counts against the maximum total sign area (See § 1427-21) permitted for all signs on a site and against the total area permitted for a ground sign as allowed in each district.
- (f)
- (g) Ground signs are subject to the requirements of all City of Cincinnati departments and agencies.

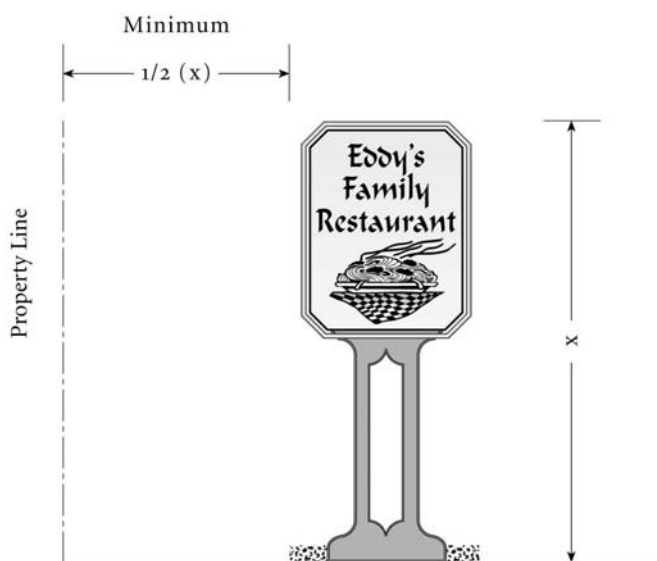


FIGURE 1427-25-A Ground Signs





FIGURE 1427-25-B Examples of Ground Signs

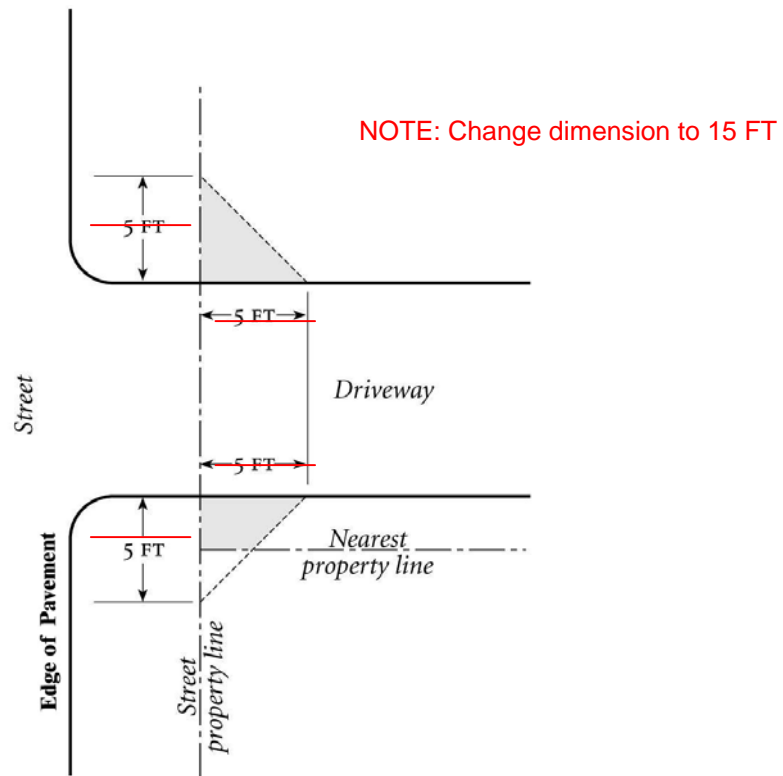


FIGURE 1427-25-C Site Triangle

§ 1427-26. Sandwich Board Sign Regulations.

The following regulations apply to sandwich board signs (See § 1427-03-S), unless more specifically regulated elsewhere in this Chapter or by the District regulations applicable to the zoning district in which the sign is located:

- (a) Only one sandwich board sign is permitted per retail business or service.
- (b) Such a sign shall be displayed only during the business hours of the establishment.
- (c) Each sandwich board sign shall be limited in size to a maximum total sign face area of 12 square feet and 6 square feet for any single face. A single sign face shall not exceed 3 feet in height and 2 feet in width.
- (d) Sandwich board signs in the public right of way shall be in compliance with with § 723-12 of the Municipal Code (Ordained by Ord. No. 184-1992, eff. May 29, 1992).

§ 1427-27. Projecting Sign Regulations.

The following regulations apply to projecting signs (See § 1427-03-P2), unless more specifically regulated elsewhere in this Chapter or by the District regulations applicable to the zoning district in which the sign is located:

- (a) A projecting sign must be at least ten feet above the surface over which it projects, or at least 16 feet above a private vehicular passageway.
- (b) A projecting sign may not be installed above the roofline of a building or structure, or have a sign height more than 20 feet above the average natural grade at the sign location, whichever is less.
- (c) A projecting sign may not be wider than three and one-half feet nor exceed eight feet in height.
- (d) A projecting sign must be setback at least five feet from an interior side lot line or a division wall between different establishments.
- (e) A projecting sign may not project above a roofline. Refer to Figure 1427-27-A.
- (f) A projecting sign that projects into the right-of-way requires a revocable street privilege.
- (g) Projecting signs may only be located along or oriented toward a street frontage.

- (h) Each individual projecting sign face counts against the maximum total sign area (See § 1427-21) permitted for all signs on a site and against the total area permitted for a projecting sign as allowed in each district
- (i)
- (j) A projecting sign may not extend more than six feet from the wall to which it is attached to the end of the supporting structure.

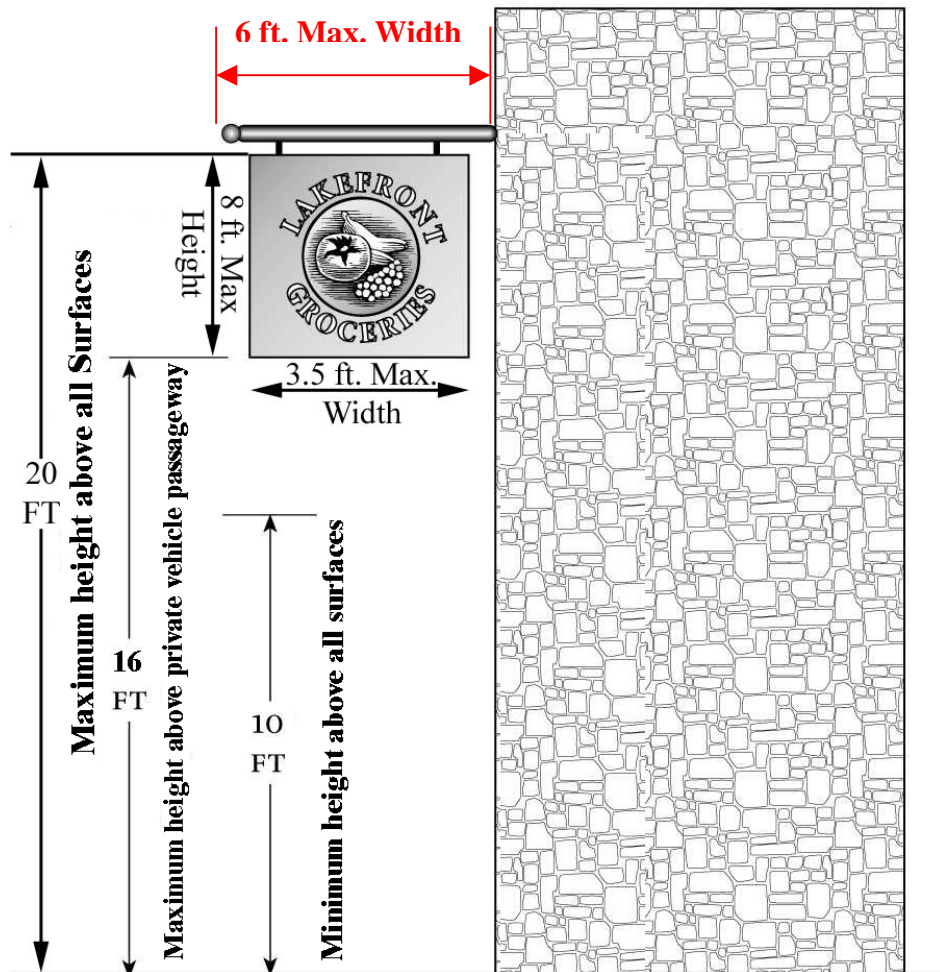


FIGURE 1427-27-A Projecting Signs



FIGURE 1427-27-B Examples of Projecting Signs

§ 1427-29. Window Sign Regulations.

The following regulations apply to window signs (See § 1427-03-W1), unless more specifically regulated elsewhere in this Chapter or by the District regulations applicable to the zoning district in which the sign is located:

- (a) Window signs may not cover more than 20 percent of the total area of the particular window to which they are attached or related.
- (b) A window sign shall be limited to the ground floor or first floor windows only, unless an establishment is located in one or more of a building's upper floors and occupies no portion of the first floor
- (c)

§ 1427-31. Signs in Historic Districts or on Landmarks

Signs in historic districts or on historic landmarks require obtaining a Certificate of Appropriateness and shall be in conformance with any applicable guidelines for the district. See Chapter 1435 Historic Landmarks and Districts.

§ 1427-33. Signs Permitted in Any District.

The following signs are permitted in all districts (except as noted) where the use the sign is associated with is also permitted, limited, or conditional, subject to all other limitations, conditions, or prohibitions in this chapter.

	Entry Feature Sign	Identification Sign for Non-Residential Uses in SF and RM Districts	Changeable Copy Sign for Public and Semi-Public Uses	Home Occupation Sign	Sandwich Board Signs for Non-Residential Uses
Sign Types Permitted	Ground or Wall only	Ground or Wall only	Ground or Wall only	Wall or Window only	N/A
Maximum Area Per Sign Face	1 square foot per dwelling unit or 1 square foot per commercial tenant up to 25 square feet	24 square feet for public and semi-public uses; 12 square feet for all other non-residential uses	20 square feet	2 square feet	6 square feet
Maximum Number of Sign Faces	1	2	2	1	2
Maximum Number of Signs	One sign for every intersection between a subdivision or planned development interior street and a pre-existing perimeter street or along the street frontage of a multi-family development.	One per building	One per site	One per dwelling unit that has an existing and permitted home occupation use	One per business establishment
Maximum Sign Height	6 feet	6 feet	6 feet	The ground or first floor only unless a use is located in the second floor or higher of a building and has no first floor occupancy.	3 feet
Maximum Sign Width	12 feet	12 feet	10 feet	None	2 feet
Minimum Sign Setback	Twice the proposed sign height for a ground sign. None for a wall sign.	Twice the proposed sign height for a ground sign. None for a wall sign.	Twice the proposed sign height for a ground sign. None for a wall sign.	None	N/A
Illumination Permitted	External Only	External Only	External or Internal	None	None



FIGURE 1427-33-A Examples of Entry Feature Signs

§ 1427-35. Sign Standards for the O Districts.

Signs in the O District must comply with the following:

- (a) Maximum **Building** Sign Area. (See § 1427-21)
 - (1) *OL District*: 0.75 square feet for every linear foot of building frontage per establishment.
 - (2) *OG District*: 1.5 square feet for every linear foot of building frontage per establishment.
 - (3) *Changeable Copy Signs* are permitted in the OL and OG Districts. They may be constructed as ground, wall, marquee, or canopy signs and are subject to all other size regulations for the particular sign type selected. Only one changeable copy sign per site is permitted. A Changeable Copy Sign may not be changed or rearranged at less than a ten second interval and may not include streaming, animating, or flashing text or images.
 - (4)
- (b) Maximum Ground Sign Area. (See § 1427-21)
 - (1) OL District: 0.375 square feet for every linear foot of lot frontage on a street per site.
 - (2) OG District: 0.75 square feet for every linear foot of lot frontage on a street per site.

For Signs in the **OL District** the following regulations apply:

OL District	Ground Signs	Window Signs	Projecting Signs	Wall Signs	Marquee Signs	Awning or Canopy Signs
Permitted Signs	Yes	Yes	No	Yes, if no marquee sign	Yes, if no wall sign	Yes
Max. # of Signs	See § 1427-25	Unlimited	N/A	1 per street frontage per establishment	1 per street frontage per establishment	1 per establishment
Max. Sign Area	36 sq. ft. per sign face	See § 1427-29	N/A	36 sq. ft.	36 sq. ft.	36 sq. ft.
Max. # of Sign Faces Permitted	2	1	N/A	1	1	1
Max. Sign Height	6 ft.	See § 1427-29	N/A	See § 1427-23	Not more than 2 ft. above marquee	N/A
Max. Sign Width	6 ft.	Horizontal limits of the window	N/A	Horizontal limits of the establishment	Horizontal limits of the marquee	Horizontal limits of the awning or canopy
Min. Setback from any lot line	3 ft	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Permitted Illumination	External only	External only	N/A	External only	External only	External only

For Signs in the **OG District** the following regulations apply:

OG District	Ground Signs	Window Signs	Projecting Signs	Wall Signs	Marquee Signs	Awning or Canopy Signs
Permitted Signs	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Max. # of Signs	See § 1427-25	Unlimited	N/A	1 per street frontage per establishment	1 per street frontage per establishment	1 per establishment
Max. Sign Area	See § 1427-35	See § 1427-29	N/A	72 sq. ft.	72 sq. ft.	72 sq. ft.
Max. # of Sign Faces Permitted	2	1	N/A	1	1	1
Max. Sign Height	10 ft.	See § 1427-29	N/A		Not more than 2 ft. above marquee	N/A
Max. Sign Width	10 ft.	Horizontal limits of the window	N/A	Horizontal limits of the establishment	Horizontal limits of the marquee	Horizontal limits of the awning or canopy
Min. Setback from any lot line	3 ft. or one-half the height of the sign, whichever is greater	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Permitted Illumination	External or Internal	External only	N/A	External or Internal	External or Internal	External or Internal

§ 1427-37. Signs Standards for the C Districts.

Signs in the C District must comply with the following:

- (a) Maximum Building Sign Area. The maximum sign area allowed is as follows: (See § 1427-21)
- (1) *CN-P and CC-P Districts*: One square foot for every linear foot of building frontage per establishment.
 - (2) *CN-M and CC-M Districts*: 1.5 square feet for every linear foot of building frontage per establishment.
 - (3) *CC-A and CG-A Districts*: Two square feet for every linear foot of building frontage per establishment.
 - (4) *Changeable Copy Signs* are permitted in the CN-M, CC-M, CC-A, and CG-A Districts. They may be constructed as ground, wall, marquee, or canopy signs and are subject to all other size regulations for the particular sign type selected. Only one changeable copy sign per site is permitted. A Changeable Copy Sign may not be changed or rearranged at less than a ten second interval and may not include streaming, animating, or flashing text or images, except for time/temperature signs that may change up to twenty times per minute.
 - (5)
- (b) Maximum Ground Sign Area. The maximum sign area allowed is as follows: (See § 1427-21)
- (1) *CN-M and CC-M Districts*: 0.75 square feet for every linear foot of lot frontage on a street per site.
 - (2) *CC-A and CG-A Districts*: One square foot for every linear foot of foot of lot frontage on a street per site.

For Signs in the **CN-P & CC-P Districts**, the following regulations apply:

CN-P & CC-P District	Ground Signs	Window Signs	Projecting Signs	Wall Signs	Marquee Signs	Awning or Canopy Signs
Permitted Signs	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, if no projecting or wall sign	Yes
Max. # of Signs	N/A	Unlimited	1 per building frontage per establishment	1 per building frontage per establishment	1 per building frontage per establishment	1 per establishment
Max. Sign Area	N/A	See § 1427-29	28 sq. ft. per sign face	See § 1427-37(a)(1)	See § 1427-37(a)(1)	See § 1427-37(a)(1)
Max. # of Sign Faces Permitted	N/A	1	2	1	1	1
Max. Sign Height	N/A	See § 1427-29	See § 1427-27	20 feet above grade	Not more than 2 ft. above marquee	N/A
Max. Sign Width	N/A	Horizontal limits of the window	See § 1427-27	Horizontal limits of the wall	Horizontal limits of the marquee	Horizontal limits of the awning or canopy
Min. Setback from any lot line	N/A	N/A	See § 1427-27	N/A	N/A	N/A
Permitted Illumination	N/A	External or Internal	External or Internal	External or Internal	External or Internal	External or internal

For Signs in the **CN-M & CC-M Districts**, the following regulations apply:

CN-M & CC-M District	Ground Signs	Window Signs	Projecting Signs	Wall Signs	Marquee Signs	Awning or Canopy Signs
Permitted Signs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Max. # of Signs	See § 1427-25	Unlimited	1 per building frontage per establishment	1 per building frontage per establishment	1 per building frontage per establishment	1 per establishment
Max. Sign Area	36 sq. ft. per sign face	See § 1427-29	28 sq. ft. per sign face	See § 1427-37(a)(2)	See § 1427-37(a)(2)	See § 1427-37(a)(2)
Max. # of Sign Faces Permitted	2	1	2	1	1	1
Max. Sign Height	10 ft.	See § 1427-29	See § 1427-27	25 ft.	Not more than 2 ft. above marquee	N/A
Max. Sign Width	None	Horizontal limits of the window	See § 1427-27	Horizontal limits of the wall	Horizontal limits of the marquee	Horizontal limits of the awning or canopy
Min. Setback from any lot line	One-half the height of the sign	N/A	See § 1427-27	N/A	N/A	N/A
Permitted Illumination	External or Internal	External or Internal	External or Internal	External or Internal	External or Internal	External or Internal

For Signs in the **CC-A & CG-A Districts**, the following regulations apply:

CC-A & CG-A District	Ground Signs	Window Signs	Projecting Signs	Wall Signs	Marquee Signs	Awning or Canopy Signs
Permitted	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Signs						
Max. # of Signs	See § 1427-25	Unlimited	1 per building frontage per establishment	1 per building frontage per establishment	1 per building frontage per establishment	
Max. Sign Area	72 sq. ft. per sign face	See § 1427-29	28 sq. ft. per sign face	See § 1427-37(a)(3)	See § 1427-37(a)(3)	144 sq. ft.
Max. # of Sign Faces Permitted	2	1	2	1	1	1
Max. Sign Height	15 ft. unless adjacent to and oriented toward an Interstate then 40 ft. per 1427-25 (g)	See § 1427-29	See § 1427-27	See § 1427-23	Not more than 2 ft. above marquee	
Max. Sign Width	10 ft.	Horizontal limits of the window	See § 1427-27	Horizontal limits of the establishment	Horizontal limits of the marquee	Horizontal limits of the awning or canopy
Min. Setback from any lot line	One-half the height of the sign	N/A	See § 1427-27	N/A	N/A	N/A
Permitted Illumination	External or Internal	External or Internal	External or Internal	External or Internal	External or Internal	External or Internal

§ 1427-39. Sign Standards for the M, RF-R, RF-C and RF-M Districts.

Signs in the M, RF-R, RF-C and RF-M Districts must comply with the following:

- Maximum Building Sign Area. Two square feet for every linear foot of building frontage per establishment. (See § 1427-21).
- Maximum Ground Sign Area. One square foot for every linear foot of lot frontage per site.
- Changeable Copy Signs are permitted in the M, RF-R, RF-C and RF-M Districts. They may be constructed as ground or wall signs and are subject to all other size regulations for the particular sign type selected. Only one changeable copy sign per site is permitted. A Changeable Copy Sign may not be changed or rearranged at less than a ten second interval and may not include streaming, animating, or flashing text or images.

For Signs in the **M, RF-R, RF-C & RF-M Districts**, the following regulations apply:

M, RF-C & RF-M District	Ground Signs	Window Signs	Projecting Signs	Wall Signs	Marquee Signs	Awning or Canopy Signs
Permitted Signs	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No
Max. # of Signs	See §1427-25	N/A	N/A	1 per building frontage per	N/A	N/A

				establishment		
Max. Sign Area	72 sq. ft. per sign face	N/A	N/A	See § 1427-39(a)	N/A	N/A
Max. # of Sign Faces Permitted	2	N/A	N/A	1	N/A	N/A
Max. Sign Height	15 ft.	N/A	N/A	30 ft.	N/A	N/A
Max. Sign Width	10 ft.	N/A	N/A	Horizontal limits of the establishment	N/A	N/A
Min. Setback from any lot line	One-half the height of the sign	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Permitted Illumination	External or Internal	N/A	N/A	External or Internal	N/A	N/A

§ 1427-41. Removal of Illegal Signs.

An owner of property where an illegal sign is displayed has the duty to remove all illegal signs. If the Director of Buildings and Inspections finds an illegal sign, the Director has the duty to issue an order for the sign to be removed within 60 days. The Director has the duty to issue a notice of civil violation to an owner who fails to comply with an order to remove an illegal sign. If the property owner is found guilty of failing to comply with an order to remove an illegal sign, the Director has the duty to give notice to the owner that the sign is a public nuisance and to cause the illegal signs to be removed pursuant to § 1101-57, Demolition of Buildings and Removal of Illegal Signs by the Director of Buildings and Inspections, of the Cincinnati Building Code.

§ 1427-43. Nonconforming Signs.

A nonconforming sign must be brought into conformity with the provisions of the Cincinnati Zoning Code then in effect If the sign is structurally altered, rebuilt, enlarged, extended, or relocated; provided, however, the repainting or refacing of an existing nonconforming sign is not considered an alteration within the meaning of this section.

SUMMARY

The Sign Task Force met for more than a year to discuss changes to the sign section of the Zoning Code as adopted in 2004. It identified areas that: 1) require technical corrections such as definitions and related sections, 2) present difficulties in interpretation, administration or enforcement or require unwarranted variances through the hearing process or 3) warrant changes to conform to current practices in the industry. The discussion of these proposed changes is arranged in priority order as follows:

- Substantive Changes
 - Enforcement / Administrative Changes
 - Technical Corrections
 - Other Related Considerations
-

SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES

Calculation of Allowable Building Signs, Ground Signs and Total Sign Area

The Sign Task Force proposes that the means of calculating allowable building signs, ground signs and total sign area be revised. Building sign and ground sign areas would be calculated separately; total sign area would be their aggregate. This grew out of discussions regarding multi-tenant buildings (particularly strip centers) which are frequently oriented perpendicularly to the street and may have facades oriented to a parking lot that are often greater than the street frontage of the lot. Turn over or initial leasing of first floor space frequently requires variances, signage totals are quickly exhausted and tenants are lost.

Changing the formula would simplify the permitting and enforcement process, proportion building signs to the structure on which they are located, eliminate the need for sign plan for multi-tenanted building and provide greater flexibility comparable to other surrounding jurisdictions. This would eliminate the need for the recalculation of the entire building allocation in order to address a tenant change, reduce the number of non-conforming signs created by the zoning rewrite and obviate the number of required variances.

All building signs, whether wall, projecting, awning, marquee or canopy, would be based on the lineal frontage of the building to which they are attached and allocated by establishment. Allowable area would be calculated based on the lineal frontage of the building rather than on lot frontage and tied to an occupant's portion. This would make building signs relate only to the structure to which they are attached and individual users. It would not affect the present allocation for buildings that occupy the full width of a lot, but will no longer penalize multi-tenant projects. Conversely, it would no longer award additional sign area to a building based on unoccupied lot frontage. Awning, marquee, canopy, wall and projecting signs could be used in combination, but each sign type would have a maximum dimensions. An owner would be able to choose any combination of sign types within the total allowable area, with a limit of two building sign types per establishment.

Ground signs would be calculated separately based on lot street frontage (as presently), but independent of building signs. The current maximums for ground signs based on zoning designation would be retained. Ground signs would be prohibited in certain zones (as presently) and retain height and area limits. Provisions would be made for a second ground sign on lots with multiple street frontages; minimum lot frontage and separation between signs would be established.

The following sections of the Zoning Code are impacted by the proposed changes. All individual zone tables would have to be modified to identify allowable signage and maximum sizes.

Allocations would be described in terms of establishment bounds for building signs and lot street frontage for ground signs.

§ 1427-21	Maximum Total Sign Area
§ 1427-23	Wall Sign Regulations
§ 1427-25	Ground Sign Regulations
§ 1427-33	Signs Permitted in Any District
§ 1427-35	Sign Standards for the O Districts
§ 1427-37	Sign Standards for the C Districts
§ 1427-39	Sign Standards for the M, RF-R, RF-C and RF-M Districts
§ 1445-07	Authority to Grant Variances, Special Exceptions and Conditional Uses

Allowing Combinations of Awning, Canopy, Marquee, Projecting and Wall Signs in O and C Districts

Within the O and C Districts, no building may have both a wall and marquee sign; each are allowed separately. Awning signs may be installed in combination with either a marquee or wall sign, but are limited to 12 square feet in area; letter height is limited to 12 inches. Projecting signs are prohibited in the O Districts. C Districts permit projecting signs, but not in combination with a wall or marquee sign.

The task force believes that the prohibition against combining sign types is unwarranted and necessary and that an owner should be able to assign his sign area as he chooses, including installing an awning sign that exceeds 12 square feet in area. Window signs would no longer be counted in the total. Sign area would be limited by establishment and not by lot width and be calculated independently of any ground sign(s). All sign types would continue to have limits on maximum area, number and dimensions.

§ 1427-35	Sign Standards for the O District
§ 1427-37	Sign Standards for the C District

Calculation of Sign Face Area

The area of a sign is presently defined by an enclosing rectangle, regardless of the shape of the sign. While this makes it easy to calculate the area, the industry believes the method is too restrictive, discourages creative design solutions and leads to uniformity as owners resort to simple rectangular signs to maximize their size. The task force believes there are equally efficient ways to calculate area and would allow an area defined by an enclosing circle, half-circle, parallelogram, triangle or combinations thereof, up to maximum of three connected shapes. New graphics would be required for this section to illustrate examples for calculating face area.

§ 1427-03-S2 Sign Face Area

Exempting Window Signs from the Maximum Total Area

The present Zoning Code requires that the area of window signs be counted against the total sign area permitted on the structure. The task force believes that the 20% area limitation is sufficient and that the regulation of temporary window signs is not feasible, so has exempted window signs from the maximum area by eliminating the relevant clause. Since they are no longer being regulated, temporary window signs are also being removed from the list of exempt signs.

§ 1427-11	Exempt Signs
§ 1427-29	Window Sign Regulations

Minimum Distances/Maximum Height for Ground Signs

The proposed changes to this section specify the height and locations of ground signs safety reasons and to be consistent with other sections of the code.

§ 1427-25 Ground Sign Regulations

ENFORCEMENT / ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES

Identification Markings

The present language calls marking legal signs with its permit number and name of installer. This has been changed to require the display of a uniform identifier to be issued by the Department of Buildings & Inspections with the permit.

§ 1427-05 Applicability

Removal of Illegal and Nonconforming Signs

The 15 days given an owner to comply with an order to remove an illegal sign has been changed to 60 days to be consistent with other sections of the code and practice.

Presently a nonconforming sign must be brought up to code if it is physically changed or if the use of the property changes. The task force agrees that such signs should be grandfathered and that only a physical change in the sign should trigger compliance, so has deleted the use clause.

§ 1427-41 Removal of Illegal Signs

§ 1427-43 Nonconforming Signs

TECHNICAL CORRECTIONS

Distinguishing Between Awning, Marquee and Canopy Signs

Currently Chapter 1427 includes partial definitions of what an awning, canopy and marquee are as well as definitions of signage attached to these elements. The Task Force agreed that definitions for awnings, canopies, and marquees that clearly distinguish between types should be included in Chapter 1401 of the Zoning Code. These definitions should be based on those included the Ohio Building Code (as used elsewhere within the Department of Buildings & Inspections), which indicate an awning is more similar in form and application to a canopy than a marquee.

§ 1401-01-A14 Awning

§ 1401-01-C Canopy

§ 1401-01-M3 Marquee

§ 1427-03-A Awning Sign

§ 1427-03-C Canopy Sign

§ 1427-03-M Marquee Sign

The Task Force agreed, based on the Ohio Building Code and general views of these elements, awnings and canopies should be grouped together and separately from a marquee in the tables included in the following sections:

§ 1427-35 Sign Standards for the O Districts

§ 1427-37 Sign Standards for the C Districts

§ 1427-39 Sign Standards for the M, RF-R, RF-C and RF-M Districts

Revised Definitions for Projecting and Wall Signs

The Code presently defines a wall sign as one that projects no more than 16" from the building face and a projecting sign as one that greater than that distance. The definitions do not address their essential difference in their form or placement; the 16" measurement seems arbitrary. As revised, a projecting sign is one that projects from the wall and a wall sign is one mounted parallel to the building face.

- § 1427-03-W Wall Sign
- § 1427-03-P2 Projecting Sign
- § 1427-23 Wall Sign Regulations
- § 1427-27 Projecting Sign Regulations

Temporary Signs

In some cases, signs may be issued a Certificate of Compliance in lieu of a building permit

- § 1427-13 Temporary Signs

OTHER RELATED CONSIDERATIONS

Murals

Murals require a permit or a Certificate of Compliance to install, but are essentially unregulated otherwise. The task force agreed that murals should be maintained as necessary and their installation should not have a negative impact on significant architectural features. The task force considered restricting murals by size, location or media. It also considered allowing a small portion of a mural to identify a sponsor or product without defining the entire mural as a sign, if the commercial portion was incidental and not integral to the design. However, the task force did not want to address/restrict content and could not agree on consistent criteria to address their design/installation.

- § 1427-19 Murals

Sandwich Board Signs

The Zoning Code presently prohibits sandwich signs in all districts, leaving their administration solely to the § 723-12 Free Standing Business or Identification Signs (Sandwich Boards) on Sidewalk of the Municipal Code. Such signs are unregulated (except as possibly a ground sign) when installed on private property. The task force drafted a new sandwich board section that limits such signs by size, location and lighting, but it is uncertain whether this belongs in the Zoning Code. If so, sandwich board signs would be removed from the list of prohibited signs and added to that permitted in any district. They would not count against the total sign area for subject lot but would be limited in one per site. A new § 1427-26 was added to address Sandwich Board Signs.

- § 1427-09 Prohibited Sign Types, Locations, Message
- § 1427-26 Sandwich Board Sign Regulations
- § 1427-33 Signs Permitted in Any District